

LANDPOWER IN ASIA—HISTORICAL INSIGHTS FOR THE PIVOT TO THE PACIFIC

A Monograph

by

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ABSTRACT

LANDPOWER IN ASIA, HISTORICAL INSIGHTS FOR THE PIVOT TO THE PACIFIC, by Lieutenant Colonel Mark A. Olsen, 66 pages.

The ‘Pivot to the Pacific’ reasserts American power in a critical region, reassures American allies, and maintains the current regional balance of power in the face of rising Chinese might. Military power is essential to the rebalancing effort. Many analysts assert air and sea power will dominate military strategy and operations in the Pacific. The Navy and the Air Force suggest AirSea Battle, emerging Joint Doctrine, as the operational concept the United States should employ. It is intended to counter Chinese efforts to prevent American forces from reaching the western Pacific and limit their ability to maneuver once there. While essential, AirSea Battle does not address all potential phases of a prospective conflict. It is exclusively focused on JP 3-0 phases I ‘Deter’ and II ‘Seize the Initiative’. The U.S. experience in World War II demonstrates the vital role that land power can play in the Pacific. Land power properly employed can help American military strategy address all phases of a potential conflict. U.S. Army land power can assist in cementing strategic alliances by building partnership capacity, provide a forced entry capability, and offer the ability to expand or intensify a conflict to force it to a decisive end.

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ACRONYMS

A2AD	Anti-Access/Area Denial
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian States
BPC	Building Partnership Capacity
JP	Joint Publication
PRC	People's Republic of China
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLAAF	People's Liberation Army Air Force
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
SAC	Second Army Corps
U.S.S.R.	Union of Socialist Soviet Republics

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INTRODUCTION

Recently the Obama administration announced a pivot of U.S. focus and strategy to the Pacific. The effects of that decision are seen in the normalization of relations with Burma, the decision to station U.S. Marines in Australia, and a recommitment to support traditional U.S. allies in the Pacific.¹ This shift in national strategy requires a similar adjustment in military strategy and doctrine. Both the Air Force and the Navy have enthusiastically embraced this transition and, furthermore, suggested collectively, with the AirSea Battle concept, that they have the appropriate doctrine to guide U.S. military planning and procurement for operations in the Pacific.² In contrast, the Army has been less certain about how to respond to this shift in the focus of American policy. The Pacific theater seems to present fewer requirements for land forces than other theaters of operation. Nonetheless, the United States was involved in three wars in Asia in the twentieth century—the Second World War, Korea, and Vietnam. All involved the employment of significant land forces. The assumption that land power will be irrelevant to operations in the Pacific is premature, particularly given American history during the twentieth century. Yet the strategic and operational situation in Asia has changed significantly since these wars. As the United States' shifts its strategic focus from the Middle East to the Pacific, the

¹ Mark Manyin et al., *Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration's "Rebalancing" Toward Asia* (Congressional Research Service, 20120328), 1–4, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R42448.pdf> (accessed July 17, 2012). For the purpose of this monograph the Asia-Pacific region includes the Pacific Ocean, East Asia, South East Asia and Oceania. The rough geographic outline would extend from Guam in the east to Burma in the west and Australia in the south to China and Japan in the north.

² Department of Defense, "Defense.gov News Transcript: Background Briefing on Air-Sea Battle by Defense Officials from the Pentagon," government, www.defense.gov, November 9, 2011, <http://www.defense.gov/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=4923> (accessed July 4, 2012).

Army must think critically about how land power can contribute effectively to the realization of American strategic aims in the region.

The U.S. policy shift toward Asia is in many ways a response to the rapid increase in Chinese power over the last decade. China, like Japan prior to World War II, is a rising power that seeks a more prominent position in the world. While China is unlikely to attempt to conquer its neighbors to exploit their natural resources, it does want to ensure, at a minimum, their general acquiescence to Chinese interests and easy access to the natural resources of the region. Moreover, China is less than benign in its extensive claims to sovereignty over many of the resource-rich waters along its coasts—areas and islands claimed by several other nations in the region. As China’s power increases, it will be able to exert greater pressure on U.S. allies throughout the Pacific, potentially tipping the balance of power against the United States. While the U.S. would clearly prefer to avoid a military conflict with China, it is also evident that the U.S. must plan and prepare for the possibility of such a conflict, if for no other reason than to deter it. Given these circumstances, World War II is likely to offer the best case study for how land power, in combination with sea and air power, might be employed most effectively in the Pacific. At base, the U.S. and China have competing interests in the Pacific. The U.S. must have military forces capable of protecting U.S. interests in the region. Land forces will likely be a critical component of any U.S. effort to maintain a favorable balance of power.

This monograph will examine the question of how the United States and the U.S. Army particularly might best employ land power in the Pacific in the short to mid-term, to effectively support the current administration’s declared strategic objectives and help secure abiding American interests in the region. Implicit in this analysis is the assumption that land power will have a critical role to play, if not the central role that land forces exercised in recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. To effectively answer this question, this analysis will proceed in four general sections. First, the current strategic environment in the Asia-Pacific region must be

clearly defined. Why does the Obama administration feel the need to ‘pivot’ or ‘rebalance’ U.S. efforts towards the Asia-Pacific region? Additionally, why has the administration explicitly stated that, despite the likelihood of smaller future defense budgets, the effects of decreased American military spending will not affect the Pacific area? And further, why have U.S. allies in the region generally welcomed the stated American intent to reengage more fully in the region. Finally, how does this new American policy initiative affect American-Chinese relations?

Once the overall strategic context is clearly established, the next section will address the military consequences of ‘pivoting’ or ‘rebalancing’ American strategic focus to the Pacific, and why AirSea Battle is the assumed answer for a military operational concept to drive planning, force structures, and future procurement. As the administration’s statements and recently concluded agreements with nations in the Asia-Pacific region suggest, this shift toward the Pacific will involve a significant military component and may even make the Pacific region the priority for American military planning and engagement.³ Even the most cursory glance at the region immediately reveals both the centrality of the Pacific Ocean to military operations and the vast distances that confront the United States as it attempts to effectively marshal and employ military force there. These two factors—the world’s largest ocean and the tyranny of distance that the United States confronts in planning military operations—have led many analysts to instinctively assume that effective use of air and sea power are the keys to a successful military operational concept for the region.⁴ Additionally, given the spectacular rise in China’s economic

³ The White House Office of the Press Secretary, “Remarks By President Obama to the Australian Parliament | The White House”, November 17, 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-australian-parliament> (accessed September 29, 2012); Department of Defense, “Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense” (Department of Defense, January 2012), http://www.defense.gov/news/Defense_Strategic_Guidance.pdf (accessed August 8, 2012).

⁴ Andrew F. Krepinevich, *Why AirSea Battle* (Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2010), 1–2, <http://www.csbaonline.org/publications/2010/02/why-airsea-battle/>; Jan

power and its corresponding desire to play a more decisive role in regional and world events, most observers further assume the need for the U.S. military to account for China's expanding military capacity in any future operational concept centered on the Pacific. AirSea Battle is the collective answer of the Navy and Air Force to this multi-faceted problem. The concept, still in its early phases of development, is intended to allow the United States to best employ its air and sea assets jointly, as well as counter Chinese efforts to limit the ability of American forces to operate effectively in the Asia-Pacific region. A close analysis of AirSea Battle will reveal its strengths and weaknesses and whether, as a stand-alone doctrine, it will provide the military support necessary to achieve American strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific region.

Following a detailed analysis of the military challenges that the United States faces in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly those related to China and AirSea Battle, the thrust of this monograph will shift to an analysis of a historical case study. The goal of analyzing recent American military experiences in the Pacific is not to draw linear parallels between the past and the present day and assert that what was successful in World War II will de facto have the same results today. Rather, examining World War II in the Pacific will elucidate general patterns and practices that might remain applicable despite the notably different environment that the U.S. military confronts currently. While the military environment has changed dramatically in recent years, the United States has significant experience fighting wars in the Asia-Pacific region. While the parallel is not absolute, the similarities between China today and Imperial Japan prior to World War II are striking. For that reason, this monograph will examine applicable case studies from that conflict.

This monograph will employ several types of source material to explore fully the root

van Tol et al., *AirSea Battle: A Point of Departure Operational Concept* (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2010), 12, <http://www.csbaonline.org/publications/2010/05/airsea-battle-concept/> (accessed August 14, 2012).

questions. It will examine news reports and think tank studies to understand the current environment in Asia and the Obama administration's decision to 'rebalance' U.S. efforts. Secondly, it will consider the military situation and Chinese strategic thinking by looking closely at Chinese policy statements and strategic literature, as well as Department of Defense reports on the region. Think Tank studies on Chinese strategic and military thinking will provide additional analysis. DoD and Think Tank work on AirSea Battle will highlight how the United States military is beginning to think about the military challenges that rising Chinese power and Chinese efforts to counter American strength present. Finally, historical monographs on WWII in the Pacific from both American and Japanese perspectives will illuminate critical events from that conflict at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels, as well as across the full time span of WWII, to draw potentially useful comparisons between the challenges the United States faced in that war and what the future may hold.

A careful consideration of the strategic context of the Asia-Pacific region that clearly identifies critical American interests, coupled with a detailed analysis of the current military environment, as well as the most recent doctrinal and operational thinking, further reinforced with a historical case study, allows the development of clear recommendations for how the United States Army particularly can best plan to employ land power in the Asia-Pacific region in the near to mid future (5–15 years). A fully successful military operational concept for the Asia-Pacific region must provide the means to successfully address all potential phases of a military operation from shaping operations prior to the hint of a crisis to securing the peace following a conflict.⁵ In the event of conflict, AirSea Battle—as an operational concept focused on maintaining U.S. freedom of maneuver in the face of potential adversaries' attempts to limit strategic maneuver and communications—and its intendant capabilities will likely prove critical during Phase II 'Seize

⁵ Department of Defense, *Joint Operations* (Washington D.C.: Department of Defense, 2011), V–6.

the Initiative' and the initial period of Phase III 'Dominate.' However, as a potential future conflict progresses, it will likely shift from a decisive operation to a shaping one, as the conflict transitions into late Phase III and Phase IV 'Stabilize' and V 'Enable Civil Authority' operations. Land power, properly utilized and integrated into a more complete AirSea Battle concept will ensure that the United States has the appropriate means available to achieve decisive results throughout every stage of a potential conflict. More specifically, land power, properly employed, will allow the United States the best chance to deter potential conflict, both by improving the military capabilities of U.S. allies and partners and by clearly demonstrating American resolve to the Chinese and preventing the effective neutralization of the same allies. Additionally, land power, particularly U.S. Army missile defense capabilities, should prove a critical component of a more fully realized AirSea Battle concept and help guarantee the full freedom of maneuver that AirSea Battle seeks to retain. Finally, in the event of actual conflict, land power, Army or Marine, will prove essential to secure the gains in freedom of maneuver and access that the Navy and Air Force seek to win by means of AirSea Battle and to exploit those gains to achieve decisive victory.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

In late 2011 and early 2012, the Obama administration announced that it would refocus U.S. attention on the Asia Pacific region. The administration announced that it intends to make the Pacific theater the priority for U.S. foreign and economic policy and military planning.⁶ Additionally, in response to a perception among U.S. allies, as well as other nations, in the region that the United States had neglected to pay sufficient attention to vital issues in the Pacific while it was fixated on events in Middle East and Central Asia, particularly Iraq and Afghanistan, the

⁶ Manyin et al., *Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration's "Rebalancing" Toward Asia*, 1.

Obama administration has declared that reduction in future U.S. defense budgets will not “come at the expense of the Asia Pacific.”⁷ Moreover, the President himself declared in a November 2011 address to the Australian parliament that “the United States will play a larger and long-term role in shaping this region [the Asia-Pacific] and its future.”⁸

Given this declared “pivot” or “rebalancing” toward the Pacific region, it is essential to examine why the current administration chose to prioritize the Asia-Pacific region, effectively declaring the region the United States’ preeminent strategic interest. The fundamental answer to that question is simple. The Asia-Pacific region is the world’s most populous and currently has the fastest growing economy. Furthermore, the region is becoming more and more important to the United States economically. Since 2000, Asia has become the largest source of imports to the United States and the second largest export market for American goods after North America.⁹ Simply put, peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region are vital to the United States’ economic interests, particularly during a period in which the U.S. seeks to revitalize American economic growth and productivity.

The economic dynamism of the Asia-Pacific region is not distributed evenly. While Japan, a long term U.S. ally, is entering its second decade in the economic doldrums with no clear end in sight and recently was displaced as the world’s second largest economy, China’s economy

⁷ White House Office of the Press Secretary, “Remarks By President Obama to the Australian Parliament | The White House”, November 17, 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-australian-parliament> (accessed September 29, 2012).Richard C. Bush and Michael E. O’Hanlon, *A War Like No Other: The Truth About China’s Challenge to America*, 1st ed. (Wiley, 2007), 41.

⁸ The White House Office of the Press Secretary, “Remarks By President Obama to the Australian Parliament | The White House.”

⁹ Manyin et al., *Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration’s “Rebalancing” Toward Asia*, 6.

continues to grow at a significant pace.¹⁰ According to a recent World Bank report, China represents about 80% of the region's GDP.¹¹ Since Deng Xiaoping assumed power in China in 1979, ended that nation's suffocating adherence to Maoist ideology, and embarked on a program of wholesale economic liberalization, China has undergone a period of nearly unprecedented economic growth. China's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has grown at about 9.5% per year since the early 1980s.¹² Moreover, since the 2008 economic crisis, which caused growth to slow significantly in most of the world's major economies, China was able to maintain its exceptional rate of economic expansion, with GDP growth above 9% every year since 2008.¹³ Most observers do not expect Chinese growth to slow substantially in the near to midterm. *The Economist Intelligence Unit* anticipates that Chinese GDP growth will average 7.1% between 2012 and 2020, slowing slightly but still significantly above what the United States or any other western nation can reasonably expect.¹⁴

China's economic growth and its future economic potential are of particular significance to the United States due to the symbiotic economic relationship that has developed between the

¹⁰ Kevin Hamlin and LI Yanqing, "China Overtakes Japan as World's Second-Biggest Economy - Bloomberg", August 16, 2010, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-08-16/china-economy-passes-japan-s-in-second-quarter-capping-three-decade-rise.html> (accessed September 29, 2012).

¹¹ World Bank, *Global Economic Prospects: Uncertainties and Vulnerabilities* (World Bank Publications, 2012), 81.

¹² Bush and O'Hanlon, *A War Like No Other*, 20–21.

¹³ Anthony Cordesman and Nicholas Yarosh, *Chinese Military Modernization and Force Development: A Western Perspective* (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic & International Studies, June 22, 2012), 20, http://csis.org/files/publication/120727_Chinese_Military_Modernization_Force_Dvlpmnt.pdf (accessed August 14, 2012).

¹⁴ "China," *Economist Intelligence Unit*, April 3, 2012, <http://web.ebscohost.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/ehost/external?sid=a4ad4689-dcaa-4c59-b24b-202059887ed4%40sessionmgr11&vid=5&hid=19> (accessed April 9, 2013).

two nations. Particularly since the early 1990s, the Chinese and American economies have grown more and more inextricably linked. The United States is the destination for the majority of Chinese exports. The Chinese trade deficit with the United States has exploded since 1991. In 1991, the deficit was \$12.69 billion. By 2005, it stood at \$201.63 billion.¹⁵ An expanding trade deficit is not the only ongoing challenge in the U.S.-China economic relationship. As the Chinese have generated ever-increasing quantities of liquid capital from their thriving exports, they have used much of that money to purchase U.S. Treasury instruments. By the end of 2009, China's total U.S. Treasury holdings exceeded \$1 trillion.¹⁶ While the Chinese have slowed the rate at which they purchase U.S. Treasury bonds recently, and also expressed interest in diversifying their holdings away from such a heavy emphasis on U.S. debt, the Chinese government is the United States' largest creditor and will remain so for the foreseeable future. Simply put Chinese willingness to purchase American debt has allowed the United States to run significant budget deficits of late. China's burgeoning economy is not the only factor that makes it a power on the rise. China is the most populous nation in the world. The best estimates place China's current population at over 1.3 billion inhabitants. China is expected to remain the most populous or the second most populous nation on earth until the end of the twenty-first century.¹⁷ The combination of a rapidly expanding economy and a vast population leave China well positioned to increase its already substantial power in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as on the global stage.

¹⁵ Bush and O'Hanlon, *A War Like No Other*, 22.

¹⁶ Jeffrey A. Bader, *Obama and China's Rise: An Insider's Account of America's Asia Strategy*, 1st ed. (Brookings Institution Press, 2012), 111.

¹⁷ Cordesman and Yarosh, *Chinese Military Modernization and Force Development: A Western Perspective*, 26–27. Depending on the relative population growth rates of China and India, it is possible that India could overtake China as the world's most populous nation by the end of the century. In contrast, while the United States is the world's third most populous nation at over 300 million inhabitants, it is significantly smaller than China and unlikely to grow at a comparable rate over the course of the 21st century.

Though China as a nation is succeeding economically in dramatic fashion, given China's population size, per capita income in China remains very low when compared to the United States or similarly developed nations in the western world. In many ways, China is becoming a rich nation while a substantial percentage of its population remains poor and thus potentially resentful of the unequal distribution of wealth. It is unclear what affect this dichotomy might have on Chinese decision-making, but it is useful to keep in mind as the United States develops a strategy for the Asia-Pacific region in the twenty-first century. Additionally, while China has liberalized its economy and integrated its economy into the world market to a greater and greater extent, it remains a nation ruled by the Chinese Communist Party and thus ideologically suspicious of the United States and the unfettered capitalism and liberal definition of freedom that the United States represents.¹⁸

In addition to its growing economic power and unmatched population, China has strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific region that it is pursuing with greater and greater force. Among the most immediate and most obvious concerns is China's tenuous relationship with Taiwan. China considers Taiwan to be an integral part of the Chinese state that by a series of historical misfortunes is not currently governed from Beijing. The Chinese government has made clear on repeated occasions that its goal is to reintegrate Taiwan into the Chinese nation, preferably peaceably under an arrangement similar to the current situation in Hong Kong or, if necessary, by force. By contrast, the Republic of China, better known to most as Taiwan, sees itself as a sovereign state equal to the People's Republic of China (PRC) and is unwilling to negotiate reunification with mainland China on the PRC's terms.¹⁹

¹⁸ Bush and O'Hanlon, *A War Like No Other*, 21.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 6–8.

The dispute over the future of Taiwan is not the only issue that has the potential to disturb the peace in the Asia-Pacific region. China has extensive territorial claims in the waters that border it that conflict with many of the other nations in the region. Within the South China Sea, control of the Spratly Islands (known in China as the Nansha Islands) and the Paracel Islands (Xisha Islands to the Chinese) is disputed among China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei. China claims sovereignty over all the disputed islands in the South China Sea, while the other four nations assert their sovereignty over various different islands within the area.²⁰ While the dispute over these islands is longstanding and to date has not caused a significant conflict, the potential for such a conflict is increasing. Recent geological surveys suggest the possible presence of significant offshore mineral resources, particularly oil, in the areas around the disputed islands.²¹ Additionally, China and several of the other states who claim sovereignty over island territory in the South China Sea have indicated a desire to assert their Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) rights under the United Nations Law of the Sea Treaty.

China, Taiwan, and Japan also all claim sovereignty over islands in the East China Sea. The islands, called the Senkaku Islands by the Japanese and the Diaoyu Islands by the Chinese, are approximately 500 nautical miles east of the Ryukyu chain of islands. China's claim to the islands rests partly on historical records dating to the Ming Dynasty which include passing references to the islands. More concretely, the PRC claims that the islands were included in the terms of the 1943 Cairo Declaration which stipulated that Japan return all territory it had annexed from China. Japan accepted the terms of the Cairo Declaration as part of the terms of the

²⁰ Jianming Shen, "China's Sovereignty over the South China Sea Islands: A Historical Perspective," *Chinese Journal of International Law* 1, no. 1 (2002): 97–98.

²¹ Erica Strecker Downs and Phillip C. Saunders, "Legitimacy and the Limits of Nationalism: China and the Diaoyu Islands," *International Security* 23, no. 3 (December 1, 1998): 140.

Potsdam Proclamation when it surrendered at the end of World War II. Japan claims sovereignty over the islands based on its 1879 acquisition of Okinawa and the islands in the Ryukyu chain, in which it includes the Senkakus. As with the various territorial disputes in the South China Sea, the United States has taken no position on the contending sovereignty claims.²² Like the disputed islands in the South China Sea, the disputed East China Sea Islands are uninhabited. Both Chinese and Japanese fishermen fish off the islands. Additionally, as with the disputes over islands in the South China Sea, the economic potential of the East China Sea continental shelf makes control of the islands potentially lucrative. Geological surveys suggest the continental shelf could contain between 10–100 billion barrels of oil.²³ Moreover, in contrast to the South China Sea disputes, relations between the PRC, Taiwan, and Japan, the three claimants to various overlapping parts of the disputed islands, are complicated by a difficult and still sensitive history. In fact, recent Japanese government attempts to purchase some of the disputed islands accompanied by Chinese vessels sailing near the islands have ignited an ongoing diplomatic confrontation between China and Japan.²⁴

The maritime territorial disputes between China and its neighbors have generally been ongoing since at least the end of World War II. They have begun to take on increased significance as the price of oil has risen, technical abilities to extract oil from the continental shelf have increased, and the interested parties have begun to seek to cash in on their potential new found wealth. Additionally, as Chinese power has grown, the PRC may see multiple benefits in

²² Strecker Downs and Saunders "Legitimacy and the Limits of Nationalism," 125–126.

²³ Ibid., 124.

²⁴ BBC News, "Japan and China Trade barbs over Islands at UN," News, *BBC News Asia*, September 28, 2012, www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-19754353?print=true (accessed September 28, 2012); BBC News, "Japan envoy heads to China as ships sail near islands," News, *BBC News Asia*, September 24, 2012, www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-19697361?print=true (accessed September 25, 2012).

asserting its sovereignty in the waters off its coasts. It may be able to address its increasing demand for oil and other fossil fuels without depending as much on oil shipped from the volatile Middle East through waters that it does not control.

Relations with Japan are not the only arena in which China is taking a more aggressive diplomatic stance. The Chinese government has also increased diplomatic pressure in its dealings with South East Asian nations. The failure of the 2012 Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) conference to issue a joint communique at the conclusion of the meeting is seen by many in the region as a result of Chinese intentions to pursue its maritime territorial claims in the South China Sea more aggressively. The meeting, held in Cambodia, was intended to address the South China Sea issue and develop a binding code of conduct to govern how South East Asian nations and China pursued a permanent resolution to sovereignty disputes in the South China Sea. Most ASEAN nations involved favored multilateral negotiations, while China preferred bilateral ones. According to participants in the conference, Cambodia declined to address the question or issue a joint communique at Chinese instigation and the Chinese Foreign Minister later expressed his appreciation for Cambodia's support of China. Other states involved were less complimentary of Cambodia's role as host and apparent deference to Chinese wishes.²⁵ In response to the heightened South China Sea tensions that resulted from the ASEAN conference's failure and the PRC's decision to establish a military garrison at Sansha City on one of the disputed Spratly Islands, the U.S. State Department issued a press release in early August urging all the nations with competing sovereignty claims to the South China Sea to resolve their claims peacefully in accordance with the United Nations Law of the Sea Convention and the 2002 ASEAN-China

²⁵ channelnewsasia, "ASEAN summit fails to agree on concluding joint statement," News, www.channelnewsasia.com, July 13, 2012, www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/southeastasia/print/1213369/1/.html (accessed October 6, 2012).

Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea.²⁶ The Chinese Foreign Ministry responded forcefully, denouncing American intervention and questioning the timing of the American statement.²⁷ Recent Chinese behavior suggests that the PRC is confident in its burgeoning economic power and convinced of its rapidly ascending position in the world. China is therefore willing to use that power more and more aggressively to pursue its interests and gain direct control over all the territory that it claims.

In addition to the American economic interests in the Asia-Pacific region, the United States also has significant strategic and diplomatic interests in the region highlighted by its alliances with multiple Asian nations. The United States has mutual security treaties with Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, and Australia. These agreements, generally signed in the 1950s, commit the United States to defend the respective nations against foreign aggression.²⁸ While the United States does not have a formal alliance with Singapore, it does maintain a cooperative defense relationship with the island state highlighted by several defense agreements between the two nations, the fact the Singaporean forces train in the United States, and the

²⁶ Patrick Ventrell, “South China Sea,” government, www.state.gov, August 3, 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/08/196022.htm> (accessed October 6, 2012).

²⁷ Qin Gang, “Statement by Spokesperson Qin Gang of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China on the US State Department Issuing a So-called Press Statement On the South China Sea,” government, www.fmprc.gov.cn, August 8, 2012, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/s2510/t958226.htm#> (accessed October 6, 2012).

²⁸ “Security Treaty between Australia, New Zealand, and the United States of America” (Australian Government Publishing Service, April 29, 1952); “Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of the Philippines; August 30 1951”, 1951, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/phil001.asp (accessed October 8, 2012); “Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of Korea” (Department of State, October 1, 1953), http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/kor001.asp (accessed October 8, 2012); “MOFA: Japan-U.S. Security Treaty”, n.d., <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/q&a/ref/1.html> (accessed October 6, 2012).

frequent visits by U.S. Navy ships to the island nation.²⁹ The United States also maintains friendly diplomatic and military relations with Thailand. In contrast, U.S. relations with Indonesia have a more fraught history. During the Suharto regime, the United States saw Indonesia as bulwark against communist expansion in the region. U.S. military cooperation ended in 1992 due to Congressional concern over human rights abuses by the Indonesian government. The U.S.-Indonesia relationship has undergone ups and downs since the fall of Suharto in 1998. However, the military cooperation between the United States and Indonesia has increased of late.

The U.S.-Taiwan relationship is even more complicated. Following the ouster of the Kuomintang government from mainland China in 1949 and Mao's proclamation of the People's Republic of China, the United States continued to recognize Chiang Kai-shek's Republic of China (Taiwan) as the legitimate government of the entirety of China. That stance did not change until 1979 when President Carter recognized the People's Republic of China as the legitimate government of all of China. In place of diplomatic relations and the mutual defense treaty between the United States and Taiwan, the United States' passed the Taiwan Relations Act.³⁰ The act lays out the general contours of American policy toward Taiwan. Specifically, as part of the United States' One China policy, the United States recognizes Taiwan as a part of the Chinese nation. At the same time, U.S. policy is that Chinese-Taiwanese reunification should occur peacefully. The Act also allows the United States to sell defensive weapons to Taiwan. American

²⁹ MINDEF Singapore, "MINDEF - News - Factsheet - The Strategic Framework Agreement," government, *MINDEF Singapore*, March 17, 2011, http://www.mindf.gov.sg/imindf/news_and_events/nr/2005/jul/12jul05_nr/12jul05_fs.html (accessed October 6, 2012).

³⁰ "Taiwan Relations Act" (United States Congress, January 1, 1979), <http://www.ait.org.tw/en/taiwan-relations-act.html> (accessed October 8, 2012).

arms sales to Taiwan have been a repeated source of tension between the United States and the PRC.³¹

Since the United States' recognition of the People's Republic, the U.S. has maintained strategic ambiguity as to the exact level of American commitment to defend Taiwan. The overall goal of this ambiguity has been to reduce the chances that the PRC might attack Taiwan, in part because the PRC government could not be certain how the U.S. would respond. At the same time, the American goal has been to prevent any destabilizing Taiwanese acts—declaring independence for example—because the Taiwanese government could not be guaranteed of unconditional American support.³² This policy has been generally successful to date. Nonetheless, in the past the United States has supported Taiwan militarily to counter Chinese efforts to intimidate Taiwan by aggressive military posturing in the Taiwan Strait.³³ It is likely that the United States would support Taiwan militarily in a future military confrontation with China, and it is implicit if not de facto U.S. policy to deter such a potential conflict. However, as Chinese power increases, the cost of deterring both PRC efforts to reincorporate Taiwan and Taiwanese desires to negotiate with Beijing as an equal or perhaps even seek independence, may rise substantially. Regardless, the Taiwan Strait remains a strategically tense region and the underlying disputes are unlikely to subside in the near future.

The strategic import of the Asia-Pacific region is clear. The region is vital to U.S. economic growth and stability. The majority of U.S. imports originate in Asia and transit the Pacific to reach the United States. Asia is currently the second largest destination for American exports, and the quantity of American exports to Asia will likely have to increase if the United

³¹ Bader, *Obama and China's Rise*, 71–74.

³² Bush and O'Hanlon, *A War Like No Other*, 78.

³³ Ibid., 3, 61.

States is to substantively redress its chronic trade deficit. While the United States imports relatively little oil from the Persian Gulf region, U.S. allies in the Pacific are dependent on oil from the Middle East, which must pass through the straits of Malacca and the South China Sea to reach its final destinations. Likewise, the United States has significant diplomatic obligations in the area. The U.S. has numerous treaty allies who the U.S. is compelled to defend. The United States also has friendly relations with other nations in the region who enjoy and may depend upon U.S. strategic support. While these circumstances do impose some burdens on the United States overall they are overwhelmingly to the United States' advantage. The United States should seek in its current and future policies to maintain and if possible reinforce this ongoing advantage.³⁴

At the same time that the Asia-Pacific region is growing ever more important to the United States economically, the People's Republic of China is asserting its interests in the region more aggressively, and American friends and allies are looking for more U.S. support to balance Chinese assertiveness, the United States is also entering a period during which defense spending is almost guaranteed to decline. The American public is tired of both the high cost and ambivalent results of the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The national debt held by the public is now over \$10 trillion. It is larger relative to the economy as a whole than any time since 1945.³⁵ Additionally, the federal budget deficit hit \$1.4 trillion in fiscal year (FY) 2009 and remained at \$1.3 trillion in FY 2010 and FY 2011.³⁶ Looking into the future, the United States also faces a significant demographic challenge. As the baby boom generation retires, the costs to the federal

³⁴ Everett Carl Dolman, *Pure Strategy: Power and Policy in the Space and Information Age* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 6.

³⁵ David Barno, Nora Benshal, and Travis Sharp, *Hard Choices: Responsible Defense in an Age of Austerity* (Center for a New American Security, October 2011), 9.

³⁶ Andrew Krepinevich, Simon Chin, and Todd Harrison, *Strategy in Austerity* (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2012), 9.

government of Medicare and Social Security are likely to rise significantly at the same time as the number of workers per retiree declines noticeably.³⁷ If the United States does not address this fiscal challenge, the nation could find itself in a situation in which by 2021, the public debt exceeds GDP. If unchecked, that trend could see debt equal 187 percent of GDP by 2035, depriving the United States of the ability to borrow and severely restricting the U.S. government's freedom of action both domestically and on the international stage.³⁸

Concern over the nation's fiscal health also has potentially more immediate consequences for defense spending. In 2011, in what some might see as a game of fiscal chicken, the Congress refused to raise the federal debt ceiling absent legislation to address the deficit. The result was the Budget Control Act of 2011.³⁹ Under the terms of the act, a failure by a joint House-Senate committee to reach a comprehensive budget deal to cut the federal deficit by \$1.5 trillion would result in automatic spending cuts of \$1.2 trillion between FY 2013 and FY 2021.⁴⁰ The so-called "super committee" charged with reaching an agreement admitted failure in November 2011, setting the stage for the automatic spending cuts commonly known as sequestration to take effect in 2013.⁴¹ The administration and Congressional Republicans were unable to reach an agreement to avoid sequestration. It went into effect 1 March 2013 with automatic spending cuts evenly split

³⁷ Krepinevich et al., *Strategy in Austerity*, 11. The "Baby Boom" Generation is generally defined as those born between 1946 and 1964.

³⁸ Ibid., 12.

³⁹ Barno, Benshal, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 6.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Jennifer Steinhauer, Helene Cooper, and Robert Pear, "As Panel Admits Defeat, Battle Shifts to Automatic Cuts - NYTimes.com," news, *Www.nytimes.com*, November 21, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/22/us/politics/death-of-deficit-deal-opens-up-new-campaign-of-blame.html?_r=1&ref=opinion (accessed October 11, 2012).

between defense and non-defense spending.⁴² While there is little enthusiasm for the mandatory cuts, there is also little evidence of a bipartisan movement toward a different solution.

Regardless of whether defense spending is cut slowly and deliberately to allow the United States to redress its long term fiscal challenges or immediately as part of sequestration, it is almost inevitable that defense spending will decline significantly in the near and mid-term. As the Defense Department considers how to best posture American military power for a Pacific-oriented strategy, restricted budgets will remain a significant constraint. The same if even more pointed considerations apply to the Army as the requirement for land power in the Pacific seems less evident than it has over the last decade.

Any comprehensive policy and military strategy for the Asia Pacific region must accomplish a wide variety of tasks. First, a successful policy must deter potential Chinese aggression without the means taken to achieve deterrence creating or increasing Chinese hostility, and thus effectively undermining that effect. Put more simply, the ideal policy will minimize the likelihood of Chinese aggression without escalating Chinese mistrust. At the same time, U.S. policy will depend on the cooperation of its allies in the region, several of whom the United States is bound by treaty to defend. Therefore, the United States must take allied and friendly nations interests into account as the U.S. develops its policy. U.S. policy will have failed if America's friends in the region, no longer confident in the United States' willingness and capacity to help safeguard their interests, seek to appease China and distance themselves from the United States. Thus, the U.S. slowly losing its position of advantage in the region as previous allies and friendly nations adopt effective neutrality because they no longer trust American security guarantees would be a sure sign of a failed policy. However, the neutralization of current

⁴² Michael D. Shear, "Sequestration Takes Effect, but Impact Is Not Immediate - NYTimes.com," *The New York Times*, March 2, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/03/us/politics/Spending-Cuts-Imposed-US-Starts-to-Trim-Its-Budget.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 (accessed April 4, 2013).

friends and allies is not the only risk that the United States runs in the region. Fundamentally, the United States has no deep-rooted interests in any of the territorial and sovereignty disputes that have the potential to roil the Asia-Pacific region in the future. In ensuring that the United States maintains its allies in the region, the U.S. does not want to find itself in a situation in which allied nations' territorial desires pull the United States into a conflict with China that is in neither nation's interest. At base, the United States wants a stable balance of power in the region reinforced by continued prosperity that in the long term should lessen overall tensions.

At the same time that the United States tries to thread the needle between maintaining a generally cordial relationship with China, while assuring American allies of its commitment to them and not letting those same allies drag the United States into an unwanted conflict, it must accomplish these three challenging tasks with a smaller defense budget. The constrained fiscal environment, while essential to the United States maintaining its overall position in the world, will present significant challenges to the U.S. military. Given the unfettered resources of the last decade, American military leaders may struggle as they attempt to accomplish the President's intent on a budget.

MILITARY ENVIRONMENT

The United States faces a demanding military environment as military leaders seek to implement the President's Pacific-first policy effectively. AirSea Battle, a concept jointly developed by the Air Force and the Navy, is an attempt to counter what has come to be termed an Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) strategy. Simply put, an A2/AD strategy seeks to prevent a combatant from gaining access to a particular theater of operations and limit said combatant's freedom of action within the operational area.⁴³ An A2/AD strategy has obvious appeal to the

⁴³ Department of Defense, *Joint Operational Access Concept*, Version 1.0. (Department

PRC as it seeks to achieve a more favorable balance of power in the Pacific. The vast distances of the Pacific are a significant constraint that the United States must account for in any Pacific-oriented strategy and operational concept. China is closer geographically to both the most significant potential international hotspots in the Pacific and the United States' allies in the region than is the United States. Thus, unless a substantial portion of the United States forces are forward-based in the Western Pacific, American response time to a crisis in the region will almost inevitably be slower than the Chinese. Additionally, effective Area Denial by the PLA could significantly limit the efficacy of U.S. forces already in the western Pacific.

It is important to note that Anti-Access/Area Denial is an American concept used to describe what American defense analysts see as Chinese efforts to systematically impede American access to and freedom of movement in the Western Pacific.⁴⁴ The most comprehensive analysis of Chinese military thinking suggests that what Americans term A2/AD efforts are more precisely Chinese efforts to find asymmetric responses to what the Chinese perceive as overwhelming American military advantages in critical areas.⁴⁵ To understand both the military environment in the Asia-Pacific region and Chinese strategies to counter American military dominance accurately, it is imperative to recognize clearly how the Chinese perceive their military problems, as well as the solutions they are seeking to those selfsame problems. Chinese perceptions of the world military situation changed dramatically because of events during the 1990s. American performance during Operation Desert Storm shocked Chinese

of Defense, 2012), i.

⁴⁴ Krepinevich, *Why AirSea Battle*, 13–14; van Tol et al., *AirSea Battle: A Point of Departure Operational Concept*, 20; Roger Cliff et al., *Entering the Dragon's Lair, Chinese Antiaccess Strategies and Their Implications for the United States* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2007), 17.

⁴⁵ Cliff et al., *Entering the Dragon's Lair*, 26.

military officials due to the United States' ability to deliver lethal precision strikes. That unexpected success, from the Chinese perspective, prompted the PRC to reevaluate their theory of war and supporting operational concepts. China has employed a series of doctrinal concepts since the foundation of the PRC in 1949. Historically, given its abundant manpower and Maoist military tradition, China emphasized a mass conscript army that would triumph by overwhelming a potential foe. After 1991, convinced that their previous concepts of war had no real chance of success if forced to confront the full weight of American technology, the Chinese radically revised their theory of war.⁴⁶ In the place of “people’s war under modern conditions,” which posited a conflict fought by a mass army using industrial technology, the Chinese instead developed a theory of modern war that they term “Local Wars under High Technology Conditions.”⁴⁷ Recently the Chinese modified the name of this concept but not its fundamental focus to “Local Wars under conditions of Informationization.”⁴⁸ This concept of war accepted that were China to fight a future war against a modern power, high technology, particularly information systems, would dominate the conflict. Additionally, following the Gulf War, the Chinese realized that at least in the near to mid-term, if they had to fight another great power, the United States was the most likely foe. Moreover, the United States would enjoy overwhelming technological superiority.

The United States’ ability to counter Chinese pressure on Taiwan during the 1995-1996 crisis over Chinese-Taiwanese relations further highlighted the PRC’s relative military weakness. The United States deployed two carrier battle groups east of Taiwan in a show of force that the

⁴⁶ Cliff et al. *Entering the Dragon's Lair.*, 18–21.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴⁸ Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, *China’s National Defense in 2010* (People’s Republic of China, n.d.), 7, http://merln.ndu.edu/whitepapers/China_English2010.pdf (accessed July 17, 2012).

Chinese had no effective means to offset. This action reinforced Chinese perceptions of the technological gap between the U.S. and China.⁴⁹ For the Chinese, it also highlighted the ongoing tension between U.S. and Chinese interests and the critical need to develop means to undermine American military hegemony.⁵⁰ Chinese concern over the United States' recent "pivot" toward the Asia-Pacific region simply reinforced a longstanding Chinese perception. What American analysts term as A2/AD strategies are an outgrowth of Chinese efforts to find asymmetric means to counter American technological dominance.

"Local Wars under conditions of Informationization" is the current Chinese theory of war.⁵¹ It describes what the Chinese perceive as the comprehensive environment—military, political, technological, and informational being the most dominant factors—in which a conflict against another great power would occur. In addition to the extensive use of high technology, Chinese military thinkers believe such a war would be limited geographically, high intensity, of short duration, and focused on achieving limited political goals. The Chinese also expect that military action alone will not determine the results of the conflict. Instead, a continuous interaction between the military domain and the political sphere will ultimately determine the outcome of the war.⁵² Thus, as the Chinese survey the modern military landscape, they expect to fight the type of war described above and have tailored their efforts at modernizing their forces in line with their theory of war. While Chinese judgments on the likely nature of a future war are not

⁴⁹ Cortez Cooper, *Joint Anti-Access Operations: China's "System of Systems" Approach*, Testimony (Rand Corporation, January 2011), 2.

⁵⁰ Bush and O'Hanlon, *A War Like No Other*, 6.

⁵¹ Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2012* (Department of Defense, May 2012), 3, http://www.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/2012_CMPR_Final.pdf (accessed July 17, 2012).

⁵² Cordesman and Yarosh, *Chinese Military Modernization and Force Development: A Western Perspective*, 34–35.

determinative, American military planners would do well to consider Chinese strategic thinking and the resulting military forces as the United States updates its own military forces and doctrine for a strategy centered on the Pacific.

While “Local War under conditions of Informationization” is best understood as China’s theory of war, “Active Defense” is China’s current military strategy.⁵³ Essentially, “Active Defense” states that the PRC will never take aggressive offensive action outside its territory, but is prepared to defend its territory as required, the implication being that some offensive action might be required as part of an overall defensive strategy. In its 2010 National Defense White Paper, the Chinese government further asserted its overall defensive posture, stating, “China pursues a national defense policy that is defensive in nature” and that “China will never seek hegemony, nor will it adopt the approach of military expansion now or in the future.”⁵⁴ Nonetheless, in the same document, the Chinese government also explicitly defined its national defense as tasked with defending the security of its “lands . . . territorial waters and airspace” and “safeguarding its maritime rights and interests.”⁵⁵ The White Paper also highlighted the need to “oppose and contain the separatist forces for ‘Taiwan independence.’”⁵⁶ While these statements are unremarkable in and of themselves, they are noteworthy given how expansively China has defined its land and maritime territory. They should also cause outside observers to question China’s total commitment to a defensive military policy. In addition to its claim to a completely defensive military policy, as part of that, China also has an explicit policy of “no first use” of

⁵³ Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, *China’s National Defense in 2010*, 6, 20.

⁵⁴ *China’s National Defense in 2010*, 6.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

nuclear weapons. However, that policy is tied to uses outside of sovereign Chinese territory. There are indications that China would consider using nuclear weapons if required to regain control of Taiwan.⁵⁷ In sum, while China generally professes pacific intentions towards its neighbors, the United States should focus more on China's strategic interests and how it defines those interests than Chinese statements of good intent when planning military strategy and developing military doctrine for the Asia-Pacific region.

Since the 1991 Gulf War, the resulting Chinese realization of their relative military deficit vis à vis the United States, and as their supposition that the United States is their most dangerous potential enemy, the Chinese military has paid close attention to U.S. military strengths and vulnerabilities.⁵⁸ Repeated U.S. military engagements around the world have allowed the Chinese many opportunities to study and critique U.S. performance and identify American strengths and weaknesses. From that study, the Chinese have attempted to develop means to counter the U.S.⁵⁹

Before, closely examining how China might attempt to defeat the United States in a "Local War under conditions of Informationization," it is important to delineate clearly the U.S. capabilities that China intends to nullify. Perhaps the most fundamental advantage the United States has to date had in a conflict with any potential foe is its complete domination of space. The United States' resulting ability to exploit space systems, particularly satellites, is vital to ongoing

⁵⁷ John Lewis and Litai Xue, *Imagined Enemies: China Prepares for Uncertain War* (Stanford University Press, 2006), 273.

⁵⁸ Cliff et al., *Entering the Dragon's Lair*, 18–50; Peng Guangqian and Yao Youzhi, eds., *The Science of Military Strategy* (Beijing: Military Science Publishing House, 2005), 411; Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2012*, 3.

⁵⁹ Roger Cliff, *Anti-Access Measures in Chinese Defense Strategy*, Testimony (Rand Corporation, January 27, 2011), 2.

American military dominance. Satellites allow the United States a myriad of advantages generally not available to its enemies. They provide unparalleled reconnaissance, precision target location by means of GPS, and a vast communications network that allows real-time communications. Related to its satellite capabilities, the United States also depends on a vast array of interrelated computer networks to pass information quickly, easily, and cheaply. American cyber capabilities allow the United States unprecedented situational awareness. The United States military has come to depend on the ability to move information by computer network.⁶⁰ The same situation applies in civilian computer networks, be they governmental or in the private sector.

The combination of real-time or near real-time intelligence married to precise targeting information and precision munitions has allowed the United States to attack discreet targets from a distance with unprecedented accuracy. The last two decades of American military engagements around the world have continually highlighted this American capability. At the same time, in addition to the satellite and cyber capabilities that undergird American precision strike, there is a suite of delivery systems that enable these strikes. Generally, these strikes occur in one of three ways: by long-range missile attack (either ballistic or cruise missiles); by long-range aircraft, namely B-1, B-2 or B-52 bombers; or by short-range aircraft.⁶¹ These precision capabilities have allowed the United States to destroy enemy targets while both minimizing collateral damage and significantly decreasing the risk of American casualties. However, short-range aircraft make up the bulk of American precision strike capability.⁶² Air Force strike aircraft depend on bases relatively close to their targets, while the Navy must position aircraft carriers in

⁶⁰ Krepinevich, *Why AirSea Battle*, 15–16.

⁶¹ Mark Gunzinger, *Sustaining America's Strategic Advantage in Long Range Strike* (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2010), 15–16.

⁶² Ibid., 3.

range of prospective targets. Thus, at present, American precision strike depends overwhelmingly on access to bases within range of possible targets and/or the freedom of maneuver to sail ships within range of the same targets.

At the same time that, over the last two decades, the United States military has demonstrated an impressive level of military competence, the U.S. military is not overwhelmingly large. While significant U.S. forces are forward deployed, the experience of the Gulf War, U.S. peace operations in the Balkans, as well as the more recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, have clearly demonstrated that the United States must deploy significant forces into a theater prior to engaging in decisive operations.⁶³ The United States Navy allows American control of the sea-lanes and thus the unfettered deployment by sea of significant American combat power prior to any conflict. Likewise, U.S. Air Force's ability to control the airspace conveys a similar advantage. Like current American precision strike, American strategic mobility is an essential capability that also depends on access to friendly bases. Without access to ports and airfields, U.S. forces cannot deploy. The need for bases relatively close to China from which American forces can operate effectively is thus imperative. While the United States currently has access to bases in the region, most are in allied nations. The United States is therefore critically reliant on allied support to operate effectively in the western Pacific.⁶⁴

From the Chinese perspective, the U.S. capabilities that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is most intent on countering are American satellites, networks, precision strike, and strategic mobility.⁶⁵ As much as possible, they also intend to weaken the links between the

⁶³ Richard W. Stewart, ed., *American Military History, Volume II: The United States Army in a Global Era, 1917-2008*, vol. II, 2nd ed. (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 2010), 417,446,451–452,468–474,480–481.

⁶⁴ van Tol et al., *AirSea Battle: A Point of Departure Operational Concept*, 9.

⁶⁵ Cooper, *Joint Anti-Access Operations: China's "System of Systems" Approach*, 3–4.

United States and its Asian allies.⁶⁶ It is these Chinese efforts to defeat critical American capabilities that U.S. analysts have labeled Anti-Access/Area Denial. The AirSea Battle operational concept is intended to counter Chinese A2/AD efforts, guarantee continued American access to, and influence in the region. Andrew Krepinevich, borrowing a term from the PLA, describes the collective means that the Chinese are attempting to develop as “Assassin’s Mace” and sees the capabilities as a deliberate, coherent means to counter U.S. strengths critical to operating in the western Pacific.⁶⁷ Other analysts see these capabilities less as a separate operational concept and more in terms of Chinese asymmetric attempts to counter American strengths that they lack the means to defeat directly. Regardless, it is clear that the Chinese are developing both doctrinal and technological solutions to counter what they view as the capabilities most vital to U.S. military dominance.

While it is difficult to ascertain exactly what capabilities the Chinese are developing, it is clear that the PLA has developed a kinetic anti-satellite (ASAT) weapon and likely has the ability to “dazzle” or temporarily blind a U.S. satellite with a laser.⁶⁸ Additionally, the Chinese have developed significant cyber capabilities to target U.S. computer networks and thus potentially severely restrict U.S. ability to exchange information freely.⁶⁹ The Chinese might also employ a nuclear weapon to generate an electro-magnetic pulse in low earth atmosphere that would disable a wide range of electronic devices in the area, thus simultaneously attacking both U.S. satellites

⁶⁶ van Tol et al., *AirSea Battle: A Point of Departure Operational Concept*, 5.

⁶⁷ Krepinevich, *Why AirSea Battle*, 12.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 15.

⁶⁹ Cordesman and Yarosh, *Chinese Military Modernization and Force Development: A Western Perspective*, 38.

and networks.⁷⁰ In the event of a conflict between the United States and China, were China to succeed in eliminating or severely restricting U.S. ability to use its satellites and at the same time degrade U.S. cyber capabilities by network attacks or malware, China would have significantly evened the scales of the conflict.

It is also imperative that the PLA, and the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) specifically, find means to counter American naval dominance. If the PRC intends to regain Taiwan by force or aggressively assert its claims to territory in the South or East China Seas, it must prepare to confront the U.S. Navy and severely restrict the U.S. Navy's ability to maneuver freely. With that task in mind, the Chinese are developing ballistic missiles potentially capable of targeting aircraft carriers, sea skimming cruise missiles designed to strike enemy ships at the water line, large radars capable of detecting and tracking ships over the horizon, and modern mines to restrict naval freedom of movement, as well as fielding large numbers of quiet diesel submarines.⁷¹ The PLAN's desired effect is to prevent U.S. naval forces not in the western Pacific from accessing the region easily and inhibit the freedom of maneuver of forces already in the theater.

Given the importance of airfields and ports to the U.S. military, the Chinese are also developing short-range ballistic missiles to target those facilities, overwhelm American air defense systems, and render critical bases unusable to U.S. forces.⁷² Additionally, given that most

⁷⁰ Krepinevich, *Why AirSea Battle*, 17.

⁷¹ Krepinevich, *Why AirSea Battle*; van Tol et al., *AirSea Battle: A Point of Departure Operational Concept*; Cordesman and Yarosh, *Chinese Military Modernization and Force Development: A Western Perspective*; Cooper, *Joint Anti-Access Operations: China's "System of Systems" Approach*; Cliff, *Anti-Access Measures in Chinese Defense Strategy*; Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2011* (Department of Defense, 2011); Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2012*, 7.

⁷² Cooper, *Joint Anti-Access Operations: China's "System of Systems" Approach*, 4–5.

U.S. bases are in foreign countries, China would likely intend to deny the U.S. use of critical bases by convincing U.S. allies to restrict U.S. use of its bases at a critical moment. These efforts would likely be a combination of military threat and diplomatic incentives. To be effective, Chinese efforts at neutralizing American allies in the region would probably begin well before any open conflict and have as a goal the gradual “Finlandization” of critical allies, a process during which erstwhile American allies slowly drift towards China.⁷³

China has embarked on a military modernization program geared to equipping the PLA and its component services with the equipment required to fight a modern war against a highly networked, technologically advanced opponent. China’s overall military spending has increased commensurate with its rising wealth.⁷⁴ However, increases in Chinese military spending have not been distributed evenly across the force. Instead, increased military spending has generally been focused on systems and technology that will allow the PLA to pursue an A2/AD strategy in the western Pacific. The PLA Air Force (PLAAF) has fielded more modern fighter aircraft, as well as bombers that can range targets in Taiwan. The PLAN is increasing its number of submarines, advanced torpedoes, and deep-water mines, as well as fielding anti-ship cruise missiles. The Second Artillery Corps (SAC), the component of the PLA responsible for nuclear deterrence and conventional ballistic missile strikes, is developing short and longer range missiles equipped to target ships and critical bases. The SAC is also responsible for Chinese anti-satellite operations. The PLA is also increasing its cyber capabilities. It has developed what it terms an Integrated

⁷³ van Tol et al., *AirSea Battle: A Point of Departure Operational Concept*, 5.

⁷⁴ Cordesman and Yarosh, *Chinese Military Modernization and Force Development: A Western Perspective*; Joachim Hofbauer, Priscilla Hermann, and Sneha Raghavan, *Asian Defense Spending, 2000-1011* (Center for Strategic & International Studies, October 2012), 11.

Network and Electronic Warfare (INEW) doctrine to gain and maintain information superiority.⁷⁵

Collectively, it seems clear that China intends to develop the required military technology in sufficient numbers to contest American military superiority in the Western Pacific.⁷⁶

Geography has a significant effect on China's A2/AD strategy. In Chinese strategic literature, two chains of islands define the western Pacific. The first describes a line from Kyushu in the Japanese archipelago south to Taiwan, the Philippines, and around the South China Sea. The second island chain extends from central Honshu through the Marianas, to Guam and Palau, ending along the coast of New Guinea. Given China's assumption that a future "Local War under conditions of Informationization" will prove short and will end as much due to the political situation as to decisive military victory, the Chinese leadership likely does not expect to have to defeat the United States in a protracted conflict. Instead, they plan to seize an advantageous position in the western Pacific, prevent the U.S. from reacting decisively, and force the U.S. to choose either a protracted, costly, and bloody war, or an unfavorable political settlement. Preventing the U.S. from operating effectively within the first island chain and restricting U.S. forces ability to maneuver freely as they move west from the second island chain will likely accomplish China's intent.

⁷⁵ Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China*, 25.

⁷⁶ Cordesman and Yarosh, *Chinese Military Modernization and Force Development: A Western Perspective*, 40; Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2012*, 6–7; Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, *China's National Defense in 2010*, 9–10.



Figure 1: First and Second Island Chains.

Source: DoD Annual Report to Congress. Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2012

Both the Navy and the Air Force have proposed AirSea Battle as the de facto template to guide U.S. military operational doctrine for use in the Pacific theater. The Air Force and Navy intend to develop tactics, infrastructure, and technology to allow the United States to counter effectively Chinese efforts to restrict American maneuver within the first island chain and maintain the ability to deploy forces into the western Pacific in the event of a conflict with China. In practice, AirSea Battle will require improved U.S. capabilities in missile defense, anti-

submarine warfare, protection of cyber networks, and the ability to defend the United States' critical satellites or operate without some of the capabilities that satellites currently provide. Given the potential vulnerability of the fleet, the United States must accept that any fleet might have to operate under conditions which make surface vessels increasingly vulnerable to Chinese missile attack until such time as that risk has been effectively mitigated. Additionally, the United States may also find that short-range strike aircraft become increasingly less effective with the need to base them within range of a potential threat.⁷⁷ Regardless of how operationally effective AirSea Battle is when the concept is fully developed and implemented, defending critical bases and maintaining access to as many basing facilities as possible across the region will be imperative. U.S. Army air defense, particularly against tactical ballistic missiles, will be critical to effective air base defense and, as such, must be incorporated into the final AirSea Battle concept.

The United States faces a significant military challenge in the western Pacific. The PRC has clear strategic interests in the area that the Chinese government believes American military power and alliances threaten. The PLA has purposefully studied American military practice to understand U.S. strengths and weaknesses. Further, the PLA has focused much of its doctrinal and modernization efforts on developing operational concepts and military equipment that will allow it to counter the U.S. despite a continuing technological gap. In the event of war, China does not intend to destroy the U.S. military. Rather, the PRC and the PLA intend to raise the cost of fighting in time, blood, and treasure to such a degree that the United States will sacrifice its own interests or those of its allies, interests that it previously conceived as vital, in exchange for peace.

At the same time, American allies present a different challenge. Maintaining the currently favorable balance of formal alliances and generally friendly nations is in the United States' long-term strategic interest. However, American allies have interests with regard to China that in

⁷⁷ Krepinevich, *Why AirSea Battle*, 17–23; van Tol et al., *AirSea Battle: A Point of Departure Operational Concept*, 21,25; Cliff et al., *Entering the Dragon's Lair*, 49–50.

substance do not materially concern the United States. Thus, the United States faces a situation in which it wishes to deter China without antagonizing it and reassure American allies without encouraging them to embroil the United States in purely local disputes. The U.S. must also be in a position to win a conflict at an acceptable cost in the event that deterrence fails.

AirSea Battle, a concept still in its infancy, is an initial answer to some of the military challenges posed by the PLA's modernization. By close cooperation, the Air Force and the Navy seek to develop means to lessen the effectiveness Chinese efforts to respond to American strengths asymmetrically. If current assessments of developing Chinese asymmetric capabilities are correct, the United States must be ready to counter Chinese developments in three general areas—attacks against U.S. cyber networks and satellites, attempts to neutralize U.S. air power by missile attacks against airfields, as well as attempts to negate American sea power by missile, submarine, and mine warfare. Initial AirSea Battle efforts have begun to address some of these risks—acknowledging that American forces may not enjoy the smooth communications and near omniscient view of the physical battlefield that satellites provide, considering how to integrate Navy air defense capabilities to defend air bases, and potentially hardening those bases to make them less vulnerable to missile attacks. Other potential responses require more development—procuring unmanned combat aerial vehicles (UCAVs) to increase the range of American airpower while decreasing overall vulnerability and lessening American dependence on carrier aviation and aircraft carriers for power projection for example.⁷⁸ Improving the ability to defend or replace American satellites, responding aggressively to Chinese cyber-attacks, and targeting Chinese missile facilities would also likely figure in any overall response to Chinese A2/AD efforts. However, it is difficult to know for certain what exact steps the United States has taken in any of

⁷⁸ van Tol et al., *AirSea Battle: A Point of Departure Operational Concept*, 84; U.S. Navy, "Naval Operations Concept 2010" (U.S. Government Printing Office, n.d.), 84, <http://www.navy.mil/maritime/noc/NOC2010.pdf> (accessed September 25, 2012).

these areas. Nonetheless, it is important to consider whether, even if AirSea Battle is fully realized as an effective operational concept, the concept will fully satisfy American military requirements in the Asia-Pacific region. While if successful, AirSea Battle may deter potential Chinese aggression, it does little to cement the alliances that the United States depends on to maintain and enhance regional stability, nor does AirSea Battle offer a clear path to transition from defense and deterrence to offensive action in the event that such action is necessary.

HISTORICAL CASE STUDY

As was noted by van Tol in his *AirSea Battle, a Point of Departure Concept*, in the event of war in the Pacific, China will likely employ a military strategy quite similar to the one pursued by Imperial Japan during World War II.⁷⁹ The United States' current strategic situation in the Pacific and the situation that existed prior to the start of World War II present numerous parallels. The PRC, like Imperial Japan, is a rising power that is actively seeking to extend its influence throughout the region. While militarily weaker than the United States in general, present day China, like pre-war Japan, is steadily increasing its military capabilities and focusing those capabilities to counter American strength. Additionally, like prior to World War II, the United States has allies in the Pacific who have related but different interests than the U.S. Prior to World War II, European powers were primarily concerned with retaining their colonial empires in the face of potential Japanese aggression. In contrast, the United States was concerned with Japanese aggression in China and defending the Philippines. These broad similarities, as well as the generally constant physical environment make the comparison worthwhile.

In the event of a Sino-American crisis, given Chinese advantages with regard to time and space, China will likely seek to seize a position of advantage, then defend and delay while

⁷⁹ van Tol et al., *AirSea Battle: A Point of Departure Operational Concept*, 21.

compelling the United States and its allies to react to regain the initiative. Analysts of the overall situation have advanced several potential scenarios along these lines.⁸⁰ In contrast, the United States faces two fundamental military problems in the Western Pacific. First and ideally, it must deter Chinese aggression to include any military attempt to regain Taiwan by force. Should that fail, the President will face the dilemma of acquiescing to Chinese aggression or undertaking a counterattack to regain the initiative and reverse the effects of Chinese aggression. Deterrence is doubly difficult because it must inhibit Chinese aggression without prompting adventurism by American allies. Thus, the PRC and American allies should ideally be both confident of the final effectiveness of potential American intervention and uncertain under what circumstances it might occur. The descriptions of Chinese and American challenges in the twenty-first century could easily describe the Japanese and American situation in the 1930s.

World War II in the Pacific provides a useful case study against which to test American operational concepts for the twenty-first century, due to the acute parallels between the strategic and operational problems or potential problems that Imperial Japan and the current PRC present. Nonetheless, the intent of this work is not to review the entirety of World War II in the Pacific to produce an exhaustive catalogue of potentially useful lessons learned. Instead, looking at the war in the Pacific broadly while focusing briefly on critical events offers the chance to draw on actual American combat experience, which should provide more profound conclusions than simply speculating on possible future events with potential future capabilities. In an effort to bound the problem, this monograph will consider the war in the Pacific in three distinct phases. They are the U.S. effort to deter and halt Japanese aggression prior Pearl Harbor; U.S. defense against

⁸⁰ Evan Braden Montgomery, *Defense Planning for the Long Haul: Scenarios, Operational Concepts, and the Future Security Environment* (Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2009), 29–34, <http://www.csbaonline.org/publications/2010/01/defense-planning-for-the-long-haul/>; Andrew F. Krepinevich, *Seven Deadly Scenarios: A Military Futurist Explores War in the 21st Century* (New York: Bantam Books, 2009), 169–181.

Japanese attacks from Pearl Harbor until roughly the Battle of Midway; and finally U.S. counterattacks to regain lost territory and compel Japanese surrender from Guadalcanal until the conclusion of the war. Within those phases, a closer consideration of relevant strategic, operational, and occasionally tactical events will provide the full picture needed to draw meaningful conclusions.

American expansion into the western Pacific, the Open Door policy toward China, acquisition of the Philippines and rising Japanese power after its defeats of China and Russia increased the potential for tension between the two powerful, ambitious nations.⁸¹ That strain increased following World War I.⁸² By the late 1930s, friction between the two nations had become pronounced.⁸³ As Japan plunged deeper into war in China, the Roosevelt administration's policy was to limit and hopefully undo that aggression.⁸⁴ Using current doctrine, it would be considered Phase 0 'Shape' and Phase 1 'Deter.'⁸⁵ Clearly, this effort failed. Following, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States absorbed the Japanese offensive—at significant cost—and attempted to generate sufficient combat power to regain the initiative, counterattack, and compel Japan to accept defeat. Just as clearly, those efforts succeeded, but at dramatic, even prohibitive cost. Looking closely at the period may offer useful

⁸¹ Edward S. Miller, *War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897-1945* (Naval Institute Press, 2007), 24–25; John Toland, *The Rising Sun: The Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire, 1936-1945* (Modern Library, 2003), 7; Warren Zimmermann, *First Great Triumph: How Five Americans Made Their Country a World Power* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 6.

⁸² Akira Iriye, *The Globalizing of America, 1913-1945*, vol. III, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 75–79.

⁸³ Ronald Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun: The American War With Japan*, 1st Vintage Books ed. (Vintage, 1985), 63–64.

⁸⁴ Iriye, *The Globalizing of America, 1913-1945*, III:163.

⁸⁵ *JP 3-0 Joint Operations*, August 2011, V-6.

operational lessons to both make deterrence more effective and, if deterrence fails, to decrease the cost of counteracting aggression.

Strategically, prior to World War II, the defense of the Philippines presented the United States military with seemingly unsolvable problems. Multiple versions of war plan ORANGE failed to unravel the fundamental difficulty that the archipelago's defense posed.⁸⁶ Surrounded by water, distant from the United States while within close steaming range of Japan, the Philippines were extremely vulnerable, particularly in an era of less reliable communications and slower movement. A land-only defense of the Philippines required larger forces and more abundant supplies than the United States was likely to be able to muster easily. Thus, a combined naval and land defense was the most likely course of action for success, with the fleet being the more decisive element. However, a relief fleet could expect a long trip into hostile waters distant from any friendly base or reinforcements prior to a potentially decisive battle. Early, forward defense of the Philippines was a high-risk operational plan, one for which the Navy had little enthusiasm.

It is important to consider why the United States was unable to deter Japanese aggression prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor. The Roosevelt administration employed all elements of national power. It engaged in protracted diplomatic negotiations with Japan to address the heightening tensions between both nations. It leveraged American economic power and Japanese economic vulnerability by imposing economic sanctions on Japan. It sought to rally international condemnation against Japanese aggression in China.⁸⁷ Finally, when diplomatic, economic, and informational efforts did not produce concrete results, the Roosevelt administration sought to increase the effectiveness of military deterrence by deploying the Pacific fleet from San Diego to

⁸⁶ Miller, *War Plan Orange*, 54–55. War Plan Orange was the Joint U.S. Navy-U.S. Army plan for war against Japan. The first version of War Plan Orange was developed in 1906. The plan was subsequently updated at regular intervals throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

⁸⁷ Iriye, *The Globalizing of America, 1913-1945*, III:179–180.

Pearl Harbor and stationing B-17s at Clark Field in the Philippines as a sign of American commitment to resisting Japanese aggression.⁸⁸

None of these deterrent efforts was successful. Fundamentally, the American deterrent threat was not credible. Despite the best American efforts, Japan feared capitulating to American demands more than war with the United States. While the Roosevelt administration was actively engaged in attempting to compel a change in Japanese behavior, its efforts were inconsistent. Moreover, Japan doubted American resolve, particularly if the United States was forced to fight a lengthy, costly campaign. Further, despite American attempts to project an image of military strength, the actual deterrent effect of the United States' pre-war military deployments was minimal. Even at Pearl Harbor, the Pacific Fleet was not in range to quickly affect Japanese operations against the Philippines, the Dutch East Indies, or British Malaya. The United States' Asiatic Fleet was small, aging and generally little threat to a Japanese amphibious task force.⁸⁹ While the B-17s at Clark Field did project an image of strength, the rest of the U.S. Army in the Philippines was underequipped, incompletely trained, and effectively limited to the supplies in the archipelago at the start of hostilities.

The European powers in Asia were even less prepared to counter Japanese aggression nor had the United States developed a comprehensive plan with the Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand, and Great Britain to defend the region. It is not surprising that Japanese military leaders were confident of their ability to quickly seize their objectives and then mount a stout defense against any American counterattack. In effect, the United States, because of its resistance to Japanese expansion, had made itself threatening enough to Japan to demand a Japanese response without possessing sufficient military power on its own or as part of a coalition of allies to

⁸⁸ Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, 74–75; Toland, *The Rising Sun*, 89–173.

⁸⁹ Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, 129–130.

prevent a Japanese attack. As the United States rebalances forces toward Asia, it must avoid a similar trap of presenting sufficient strength to warrant a Chinese attack to neutralize U.S. capabilities without having the strength necessary to deter such an attack completely. U.S. strength in the region need not be exclusively military. However, the totality of American strength must be great enough to achieve real deterrence.

Once deterrence failed and the United States attempted to defend itself and its allies' Pacific territories from Japanese attack, American strategic thinking naturally focused how to defeat Japan. The U.S. decision to pursue unconditional surrender did much to shape the course of the war in the Pacific.⁹⁰ The United States' near absolute war aims, combined with Japanese suicidal resistance created a significant strategic and operational challenge for the U.S. armed forces.⁹¹ Additionally, by the end of the war, the United States was extremely reluctant to endure the casualties likely to result from an invasion of Japan. The combination of these factors produced what might be seen as a strategic trap for the United States. The United States sought to achieve near maximal goals at the same time that the American government had a definite limit on the human means it was willing to risk in achieving its goal. At the same time, the leaders determining Japanese policy were prepared to endure tremendous Japanese losses if those losses offered the prospect of a more favorable political agreement with the United States. If the United States does become involved in a war with China, the U.S. may face a similar dilemma. For the United States in World War II, the atomic bomb offered a technical escape from the strategic riddle it confronted.⁹² It is unlikely that the United States would wish to resort to similar means

⁹⁰ Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, 222.

⁹¹ John Dower, *War with Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 35–36.

⁹² Richard B. Frank, *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 188–196, 288–299.

in a war with China. Nonetheless, the United States will need to maintain the flexibility to escalate or expand a conflict to force a decisive end if necessary.

In devising both strategy and an operational concept for future use in the Pacific, the United States must avoid a similar situation in which the way in which any crisis unfolds creates circumstances that preclude the relatively orderly end of that crisis. While there are significant differences between Imperial Japan and the PRC, World War II Japan, like the current PRC, was ruled by an insular group of non-democratically selected leaders generally immune to public pressure.⁹³ Moreover, in both cases, the ability of the United States to truly understand their motivations and how they define their interests is and was limited. Operationally, therefore, the United States must fight and win while minimizing the risk that the conflict slip its political limits and take on a violent logic all its own.⁹⁴

At the operational level, World War II in the Pacific consistently demonstrated the fundamental requirement to meld land, air, and sea forces effectively to achieve decisive results. Even with critical mistakes by MacArthur, American land forces in the Philippines resisted the Japanese invaders for roughly five months.⁹⁵ Yet, despite American and Filipino tenacity, once the Japanese had gained effective air and sea superiority, the United States had little hope of defeating the Japanese invasion. Without the possibility of resupply, surrender was inevitable. The Japanese suffered a similar experience early in the war, when the Imperial Japanese Navy

⁹³ Frank, *Downfall*, 90. C. Li, “The Battle for China’s Top Nine Leadership Posts,” *The Washington Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (2012): 131–135.

⁹⁴ Dower, *War without Mercy*, 67–71; Lawrence Freedman, “Escalators and Quagmires: Expectations and the Use of Force,” *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 67, no. 1 (1991): 27.

⁹⁵ Louis Morton, *The Fall of the Philippines: United States Army in World War II: War in the Pacific* (Washington D.C.: United States Army, 1953), 98,564.

and the Japanese Army's inability to maintain an effective sea line of communication or air cover over Guadalcanal forced Japanese forces to abandon it in defeat in February 1943.⁹⁶ However, without the ability to seize and retain decisive points on land, dominating air and sea power could not project forward to threaten Japan with defeat.

This general pattern of the requirement to employ land, air, and sea power effectively in combination to seize bases, which in turn would allow the building of sufficient combat power closer to Japan, characterized the American war in the Pacific from 1943 onward.⁹⁷ As American combat power in the Pacific increased, the dueling "Twin Drives" strategy allowed both a Navy-dominated Central Pacific offensive and an Army-led Southwest Pacific offensive that generally converged at the Philippine archipelago.⁹⁸ Both offensives demonstrated the effectiveness of employing air, sea, and land power to thrust forward aggressively, bypassing Japanese land resistance by sea and air wherever possible while, at the same time massing all three at decisive points to seize critical bases and allow the tempo of each offensive to continue.⁹⁹ Admiral Nimitz's seizure of the Marshall Islands in early 1944, while neutralizing the Japanese base at Truk, is a classic example of the effective use of air, sea, and land power to capture a critical base, isolate Japanese strength and set the conditions for future decisive operations.¹⁰⁰ From the Marshalls, American forces were able to leapfrog Truk and attack the Marianas, leaving a

⁹⁶ Richard B. Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*, (Penguin Books, 1992), 582–597.

⁹⁷ Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, 255.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 279–280.

⁹⁹ Antulio J. Echevarria, "American Operational Art, 1917-2008," in *The Evolution of Operational Art, from Napoleon to the Present*, ed. John Andreas Olsen and Martin van Creveld (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 149–150.

¹⁰⁰ Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, 268–273.

substantial garrison isolated and irrelevant in the Japanese controlled Caroline Islands. In the Southwest Pacific, MacArthur achieved similar results with OPERATION CARTWHEEL, leaving substantial Japanese forces to wither on the vine at the previously critical Japanese base at Rabaul.¹⁰¹ Neither of these operations would have succeeded operationally or strategically absent the effective combination of land, sea, and air power.

Opinions differ as to the effectiveness of the twin drives as strategy; however, by 1944 the two offensives had essentially converged.¹⁰² That convergence presented the United States a substantial problem—how best to employ its overwhelming combat power in operations that would defeat Japan as rapidly as possible at acceptable cost. In contrast, by 1944, the Japanese, sought not the quick end of the war, but rather to inflict so many American casualties that the United States agreed to a political settlement that, at a minimum, maintained the Emperor.¹⁰³ By 1945, Japanese forces' implacable defense of Iwo Jima and Okinawa, and the decision of the Japanese government to mobilize the population to resist an eventual invasion, clearly demonstrate that the war had entered a new strategic reality surpassing any limits that might have previously existed.¹⁰⁴

The critical fact in this evaluation of the endgame of the war in the Pacific is that American operational excellence succeeded in rendering the Japanese military impotent by the end of 1944. The United States achieved that result in large measure by the effective combination of land, sea, and air power. However, the fact that Japan no longer had the ability to contest a

¹⁰¹ Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, 239–248.

¹⁰² Max Hastings, *Retribution: The Battle for Japan, 1944–45*, Reprint. (Vintage, 2009), 19; D. Clayton James, “American and Japanese Strategies in the Pacific War,” in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret, Gordon A. Craig, and Felix Gilbert (Princeton University Press, 1986), 149–150.

¹⁰³ Frank, *Downfall*, 84–93.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 85–86.

modern war with any expectation of success did not end the war or lead to automatic American victory. In some ways the opposite occurred. Japanese leaders embraced more extreme measures—kamikazes, fanatical defense without the possibility of escape or survival, and the near complete mobilization of the Japanese population to defend against an invasion—all in attempt to salvage something. The United States was forced to expand the conflict by using nuclear weapons and convincing the U.S.S.R. to intervene to compel Japanese surrender.

As the United States considers the future, and develops military forces and capabilities to shape that future, the end of the war with Japan should serve as a reminder of the limits of operational brilliance—it alone may not produce the intended result. Moreover, too much operational success may compel the enemy to greater extremes. In the unhappy event of a future war with China, it is unlikely that the United States will have the equivalent of the Soviet Union as an ally to enter the war and help tip the balance, and it goes without saying that the U.S. will wish to avoid resorting to nuclear weapons.

Tactically, the war in the Pacific may have less to offer a twenty-first century military planner. However, while East Asia has seen significant economic development and population growth since the end of World War II, the region is still significantly different from recent theaters of operation in both physical geography and infrastructure. Any American forces operating in the region in the future must be prepared for those demands to include densely forested regions that will limit the effectiveness of American ISR, a less developed road network than in the United States or Europe, and fewer bridges capable of supporting the full panoply of American equipment. Given these considerations, less logically demanding units that still possess effective mobility are best suited to operations in the region.

In the most general terms, the United States faced three distinct operational problems in the Pacific theater in World War II. Initially, the United States wanted to deter Japanese aggression. When deterrence failed, the U.S. fought to defend its possessions against Japanese

attack. Finally, U.S. forces counterattacked to retake lost territory and compel Japanese surrender. Considering each of these general phases and how the United States eventually succeeded provides useful recommendations for how best to use land power effectively in the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The United States faces a challenging strategic environment in the Asia-Pacific region in the near to mid-term future. Much of the nation's economic prosperity is tied to trade and commerce with the region. Additionally, the generally stable strategic situation that previously existed is in flux due to burgeoning Chinese political, military, and economic power best seen in the PRC's recent, more assertive actions. American allies and friendly nations in the region have looked to the United States to take a more active, balancing role in the area. At the same time that the political and military situation in the region is becoming more tense, the United States will likely have fewer resources with which to respond. Military budgets are shrinking and will continue to do so. All services anticipate becoming smaller. Ideally, any American operational concept developed for use in the Asia-Pacific region must account for all these circumstances—rising Chinese power, increasing anxiety from American friends and allies, and diminished means with which to maintain stability.

Not only must an operational concept function successfully given these constraints, it should also be useful in addressing all potential phases of military operations. JP 3-0 *Joint Operations* provides a useful model of the spectrum of probable military operations. That doctrine conceives of operations in phases zero to five—Shape, Deter, Seize the Initiative, Dominate, Stabilize, Enable Civil Authority.¹⁰⁵ AirSea Battle as presently conceived provides a clear way ahead for certain challenges the United States faces in the Asia-Pacific, but it is not a comprehensive answer. AirSea Battle is primarily focused on shape, deter, and seizing the

¹⁰⁵ Department of Defense, *Joint Operations*, V-6.

initiative. It does not clearly address how to bring a conflict to a decisive end. Moreover, while AirSea Battle is clearly intended to shape the contours of a potential future conflict, one of its key weaknesses is its inability to address directly the need to continue building and maintaining an effective international coalition to sustain stability in the region. The effective use of land power, at times as a complement to Air and Sea power and in other circumstances as the dominant method, will prove essential to fully meeting the United States' goals and obligations in the region within the likely constraints.

The history of American military engagement in the Pacific region does not provide a linear road map for success in the future. At the same time, the depth and breadth of that experience can serve as part of an effective heuristic against which to gauge possible future courses of action. The American experience in the Pacific in World War II should be seen in that light. It will not provide a definitive answer, but there are sufficient similarities between likely future challenges and the problems the United States overcame in WWII that a close examination of the two side by side is merited.

World War II offers clear lessons at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. It is also useful to consider how World War II began, how the United States seized the initiative, and finally how the war ended as different lenses through which to analyze potential lessons for any future conflict in the Asia-Pacific region. Strategically, WWII is a useful example of the failure of deterrence. In the Pacific that failure can be attributed to several factors—the United States' relative military weakness in the region; the lack of a coherent, established alliance to oppose potential Japanese aggression; and perhaps the tyranny of distance. During the course of the war, the United States employed a lethal combination of sea power, air power and land power together to cross great distances, seize bases, encircle and defeat Japanese forces, and use those bases to continue the tempo of attack. The effective combination of all three forms of military power at

the operational level proved fatal to a Japanese defensive scheme predicated on establishing a linear defense and punishing American efforts to penetrate it.

The operational dominance the United States achieved by the effective combination of air, sea, and land power allowed U.S. forces to seize critical positions in close vicinity to Japan and position U.S. forces for an invasion of the Japanese home islands. However, that overwhelming conventional military domination, even when combined with the destruction wrought by strategic bombing and unrestricted submarine warfare, did not succeed in achieving American political ends. That fact should give American military planners pause when considering the overall effectiveness of military power and how best to use it to achieve political results. More simply, the end of WWII clearly shows that an opponent may refuse to admit defeat even when it seems obvious. In WWII the United States succeeded in breaking that impasse by the use of atomic weapons and the Soviet entry into the war.¹⁰⁶ While potentially uncomfortable, American military planners must be willing to consider and even threaten the expansion of a conflict to force the enemy to concede. Put another way, presupposing a war will remain limited to a predetermined geographic area or medium of combat likely increases the chances of an unsatisfactory stalemate.

Tactically, the U.S. WWII experience offers several potential lessons, particularly concerning ground forces. Those forces must be easily deployable. Given the large distances the U.S. will confront in the region, the ease with which forces can be moved is critical. Once in theater, ground forces must preserve a balance between tactical mobility, survivability, and a light

¹⁰⁶ Frank, *Downfall*, 290, 332. While whether the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were decisive in forcing Japan to surrender or instead the Soviet invasion of Manchuria was determinative is a matter of ongoing historical debate, it is clear that the combination of both events expanded the scope and intensity of the conflict and finally moved the Japanese to surrender. What is important for this work is not which events were more important but that in the summer of 1945 in order for the United States to end the war, it had to expand and intensify that war beyond its already vast limits.

logistical footprint. The geography, topography, and infrastructure of much of East Asia is not conducive to equipment developed for the northern European plain or the deserts of the Middle East. Finally, a significant percentage of forces must be capable of forced-entry operations. Given that the USMC is the master in amphibious operations, Army forces should not seek to duplicate that competency but instead focus on the traditional Army strength of vertical envelopment by air assault or airborne operations.

As the Executive Branch considers how best to implement President Obama's policy of rebalancing American engagement towards the Pacific, maintaining regional stability is clearly the foremost imperative. In practical terms, for the Department of Defense, that means deterring conflict. Unfortunately, there is currently no comprehensive, multinational defense or security plan for the region. In that regard, the situation is much more similar to pre-WWII than Cold War Europe, for example. Among the most significant strategic and operational weaknesses the U.S. confronts in the Asia-Pacific region is the lack of a formal alliance that unites the various nations and allows for systematic collective action. The lack of a formal treaty organization requires the U.S. to rely on bilateral treaties with individual nations and diminishes the potential for collective action in case of a crisis. It also makes it potentially much easier for China to exploit tensions between nations in the region. The lack of a NATO-like treaty organization is exacerbated by the still bitter legacy of Japanese aggression towards and abuse of other Asian nations during WWII. While Germany has generally acknowledged its WWII misdeeds and is now a fully accepted member of the European family, Japanese ambivalence about and reluctance to confront WWII has pernicious effects. These two factors, the lack of an alliance and the unwillingness of many Asian nations to embrace fully Japan as a security partner, place increased pressure on the United States as it attempts to maintain the status quo.

AirSea Battle is an attempt at a purely military solution to the strategic challenges the United States faces in the region. At least as important is building strong regional cooperation

committed to regional stability. While the PRC may choose to act aggressively in spite of a general regional commitment to the status quo, given the traditional Chinese tendency to pursue long term gains deliberately, strong regional cooperation makes aggressive Chinese behavior less likely.¹⁰⁷ Military force can and must be a part of such a policy, but it will not necessarily be the central component.

As the American experience before Pearl Harbor demonstrates, attempts at deterrence absent a credible military threat are prone to failure. While the Japanese were completely aware of American military potential, they did not fear the forces actually defending the Pacific at the time.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, the lack of a functional alliance between the United States and its future allies, as well as the general weakness of British, Dutch, and Australian forces in the region, did little to enhance deterrence. Unfortunately, the United States faces a comparable situation in the Pacific today. The failure to establish a formal alliance in the Far East similar to NATO leaves the U.S. without an institutional partner or the benefit of the customs of cooperation and mutual support that developed in Western Europe. Rather, the United States relies on a hub and spoke system of bilateral relations in the Pacific.¹⁰⁹ This sole fact could have significant effects on future military operations in the region.

Given the large distances the United States confronts, access to bases is critical. However, without a formal alliance, there is no guarantee that U.S. forces could use bases in Korea or the Philippines, for example, to resist aggression aimed at Taiwan. Thus, in place of the formal structures that the U.S. has grown to rely on in Western Europe, American diplomats and

¹⁰⁷ David Lai, *Learning from the Stones: A Go Approach to Mastering China's Strategic Concept*, Shi (Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2004), 22.

¹⁰⁸ Toland, *The Rising Sun*, 121–148.

¹⁰⁹ Victor D. Cha, “Powerplay: Origins of the U.S. Alliance System in Asia,” *International Security* 34, no. 3 (October 2009): 158.

military leaders may need to create similar informal systems in Asia. While the U.S. military understandably views the region as one in which air and sea power dominate, that is not necessarily true for East Asian countries. Most Asian militaries are primarily land powers. Army generals head them. Efforts at ‘Building Partnership Capacity’ (BPC) will likely prove a valuable means to develop and later cement the military cooperation that the United States seeks. BPC can serve as the military component of U.S. efforts to reinforce bilateral cooperation and develop the equivalent of a formal alliance system that may allow the U.S. to use critical bases in the region in the event of a crisis. It is a low cost means to build partnership well suited to an era of limited means. BPC is an economical means to achieve effects. Army advisors and rotational units can fill this role economically thus serving to reinforce informal ties. It should be combined with concerted diplomatic efforts to strengthen existing bilateral ties and, in the context of cooperative military training and exercises, encourage Asian nations to work and train together to foster greater overall unity and perhaps develop a nascent sense of collective security. BPC then can serve as a U.S. effort to avoid the ‘Finlandization’ of critical nations in the region that some defense analysts see as a significant risk associated with rising Chinese military power and assertiveness.¹¹⁰

While it is clear that air and sea power have a significant role to play in the region, access to critical bases is imperative if the United States is to use that power to best advantage. None of the United States’ friends and allies have any prospect of developing sufficient air or naval power to fully counter aggressive Chinese expansion, should it arrive. They count on the United States to provide that power. However, they do have the bases that the United States may need in the event of a crisis. And regardless of the use of particular facilities, the U.S. will likely need cooperation from as many different Asian nations as possible to convince China of the negative

¹¹⁰ van Tol et al., *AirSea Battle: A Point of Departure Operational Concept*, 5. van Tol defines Finlandization as the neutralization of a small country by a superpower using conciliation.

consequences of overt aggression. Active army to army cooperation and training is a potentially effective means to improve the overall military capability of critical nations all the while building confidence in America's goodwill and commitment to the region. Put more simply, Army efforts at BPC may allow the Air Force and Navy to employ AirSea Battle to full effect.

In the event that deterrence should fail and the PRC choose to attack Taiwan or to seize some of the disputed islands in the South or East China Seas by force, air and sea power, perhaps employing the tenets of AirSea Battle, would likely come to the fore as the United States and its allies fought to regain the initiative and control of vital waterways and airspace in the region. Land power would almost inevitably play a complementary role during that phase of a conflict. However, land forces might well be required to seize and secure bases within the region. The United States might also wish to isolate China by seizing control of key straits and chokepoints on which China depends for maritime transition of trade goods and raw materials.

Finally, land power is in many ways the final guarantor of victory or the best possible settlement to a conflict. Given the painful history of Vietnam and Korea, as well as the less than conclusive results of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States' potential foes will almost inevitably assume U.S. reluctance to commit ground forces short of a conflict that truly imperils the United States. This is a sound assumption—at least for the next ten to fifteen years.¹¹¹ The Chinese estimation that future high technology wars will likely combine military and political action simultaneously to a greater degree than in recent conflicts is almost certainly correct.¹¹² Given the likelihood of that scenario, the United States, in conceptualizing how to use

¹¹¹ Brad Knickerbocker, "Gates's warning: Avoid land war in Asia, Middle East, and Africa - CSMonitor.com," *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 26, 2011, <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Military/2011/0226/Gates-s-warning-Avoid-land-war-in-Asia-Middle-East-and-Africa> (accessed February 16, 2013).

¹¹² Guangqian and Youzhi, *The Science of Military Strategy*, 409.

military force, should prepare for a campaign in which it must fight and negotiate at the same time. Further, both efforts should be complementary of each other. The threat of land power can and should be a credible tool for American political leaders to leverage. The ability to employ land power decisively by potentially isolating the PRC by seizing key chokepoints, ports or straits, retaking disputed islands, or even tipping the balance in a struggle for Taiwan, are possible useful ways in which to employ land power effectively. Moreover, the credible threat to deploy land forces for those purposes will inevitably strengthen any concurrent American negotiating position.

As an aside, two important points naturally occur here. First, the use of American ground forces in the defense of Taiwan would likely be seen by the PRC as incredibly provocative. Regardless of how the PRC understands American policy towards Taiwan, the PRC would almost certainly regard and describe such an action as the intrusion of foreign, western military power onto sovereign Chinese territory. Given China's unhappy history with western military forces in China, such a step should only be taken as a last resort.¹¹³ With this as an assumption, the United States must strive to maintain credible ambiguity on the subject—demonstrating a capacity to intervene if absolutely necessary but not allowing either the PRC or Taiwanese authorities to be fully confident that the United States would or would not commit ground troops. Secondly, assuming that the general strategic situation in the Asia-Pacific region does not change radically in the near future—and this assumption must be systematically revalidated as the United States continues to rebalance to Asia—in the event of a conflict, a return to the status-quo antebellum will almost inevitably benefit the United States strategically. If the threat of ground action or the actual use of land forces can reasonably compel that result, American strategic leaders must have credible means available to use.

¹¹³ Alison Adcock Kaufman, “The ‘Century of Humiliation,’ Then and Now: Chinese Perceptions of the International Order,” *Pacific Focus* XXV, no. 1 (April 2010): 3.

With these considerations, Army leaders should focus in two primary areas—advising and partnership efforts with friendly armies to build and reinforce existing ties across the region. The goal of these actions should be to improve the overall capability of friendly armies in the region, while at the same time maintaining and improving bilateral relations. These efforts should be accompanied by concerted diplomatic efforts to create a de facto regional collective security regime. Such a policy should have three salutary effects—building foreign military forces that are more professional and able to provide for their own defense more effectively, all at relatively low cost decreasing the pressure on the United States in the current hub and spoke scheme of defense as regional nations become more comfortable working together to achieve collective security; and finally, deterring any potential Chinese aggression as regional powers begin to demonstrate greater capacity, cooperation and a collective unwillingness to allow a violent change to the status-quo. As a lesser but still important aspect of Army policy, the Army should maintain easily deployable units capable of forced entry operations in the region. As possible, these units should conduct bilateral training exercises with the United States' friends and allies as part of an overall policy of deterrence and to maintain a credible forced entry option as the ultimate guarantor of American resolve.

CONCLUSION

AirSea Battle is a potentially useful way to conceptualize a means to counter Chinese efforts to identify and attack American critical capabilities and critical vulnerabilities. It is not the single answer to security challenges that the United States faces in the region. Simply matching Chinese capabilities does not guarantee that the United States will achieve its strategic goals in the Asia-Pacific region. The United States needs a strategy and supporting military operational concept that does more than simply parry Chinese thrusts. Rather these efforts should reinforce

regional stability and maintain the generally positive security situation that currently prevails in the region.

Effectively incorporating the strengths of land power into any future American military strategy and operational concept will be critical to maximizing and continuing American advantages in the Pacific theater and safeguarding U.S. national interests in the short and mid-term. Any successful military operational concept must address all five phases of a potential conflict as defined in current U.S. Joint Doctrine.¹¹⁴ Land power is critical to shaping the regional strategic environment to the United States' best advantage, to providing American political leaders a full complement of options for decisive action, and to providing offensive options to enhance potential American negotiating positions in the event of a conflict.

¹¹⁴ Department of Defense, *Joint Operations*, V-6.

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